

**DELAWARE COMMISSION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 28, 2006**

Members Present: Morris, Ennis, Carroll, Harden, Kitson, Magner, Spitzfaden, Thompson, and Webb

Members Excused: Endres, Lank, Lardizzone, Newstadt, Timberman, and Wasson

Staff Present: Davila

Guests: Michael Wilgen (MOWW), Tom Daws (VVA), Dave Gillan, Gene Rose, Frank Davidson and Fran Daney (KWVA), Ed Moczulski (LP Lo-DEL), Jack Houck and Rich Robichand (DELVETS), Ron Sarg (MOAA), Burton Barr (NARFE), Richard Citron (Director, DVA)

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to our Nation's Flag.

Chairman Morris opened the meeting by recognizing Black History Month. He reported that Tony Davila and Cam Yorkston provided the first DVD fundraising presentation for the Veterans Home at the American Legion's Department meeting. Chairman Morris discussed previous articles that appeared in the local State newspapers.

Mr. Houck reported that he turned over three flags from DELVETS to the Veterans Cemetery. Mr. Gillan asked questions about the entrance criteria for the new Veterans Home and Tony Davila responded to his questions. Mr. Davidson discussed the veteran's pension benefits proposed in HB 129, discussion followed.

Mr. Citron reported on the VA's budget and the Hospice Program currently in place at the East Orange, NJ VA Medical Center. He reported that Senator Carper will be having his annual meeting at the VA Medical Center on March 6, 2006, and they have asked Senator Carper to participate in a ribbon cutting ceremony for a new inpatient unit (4 East). He also reported that the nursing care unit is expanding the patio and wanted to thank members of the community and service groups that have contributed to this project. Recently, they moved all their computers systems to another structure and that went very well. He mentioned that there are some 30 other construction projects in the works. The VA's Nurse Executive, Maggie Homes, who has been at Wilmington for over 17 years, will be retiring and they have a search committee assigned to find a replacement. The Patient Advocate, Karen Rynkowski, will be taking a new position; she has been promoted to Administrative Assistant to the Chief of Staff. The VA has a new van being donated by the DAV, Department of Delaware, and hopes to receive it in March, which will be used in southern Delaware.

Mr. Barr discussed issues concerning legislation and Alzheimer's screening test. Mr. Davila pointed out that a reduction in the budget is expected, which will result in reductions to staff and services throughout the VA system, discussion followed. Mr. Sarg reported that he will be going to Washington, DC, in March and asked if there were any issues concerning veterans that he should take with him.

**MOTION BY ENNIS TO ACCEPT JANUARY COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES,
SECONDED BY KITSON, MOTION CARRIED.**

COMMITTEE REPORTS

CEMETERY COMMITTEE

No report.

COMMEMORATIVE AFFAIRS

Commissioner Carroll reported that the MOPH has lined up their guest speaker for the Memorial Day Service and things are progressing well. Commissioner Thompson reported that the MCL is still working on finding a speaker.

FINANCE AND LOGISTICS

No report.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Commissioner Carroll thanked Mr. Citron for coming to the Commission meeting. He discussed recent changes made regarding donation of vehicles. The 6th Annual National Medal of Honor Recognition Day Ceremony by the Delaware Medal of Honor Historical Association will be held on March 25, 2006, 12:00 noon, at the Air Mobility Command Museum, DAFB. Commissioner Carroll provided information obtained concerning the nursing home surveys. He reported that the balance of the Veterans Home fund is \$157,647.49, as of February 24, 2006.

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

Commissioner Thompson reported that he was unsuccessful in arranging a meeting with Speaker Spence prior to the Commission meeting; however, Speaker Spence contacted him at home the night before and spoke with him. Speaker Spence felt that a pitch needed to be made to the Senate in our favor for the Veterans Home. He discussed information concerning the Veterans Home and the importance of the Commissioners returning the surveys. There was also a quick overview about bills pertaining to veterans and where they were in the legislative process.

PERSONNEL

Mr. Davila reported that the Conservation Tech II and casual seasonal position at the Northern Cemetery have been posted. There was discussion about the hiring process/positions for the Veterans Home and the expected timeframe.

MONUMENTS & MEMORIALS

No report.

HOME DEDICATION

Commissioner Harden reported that the Dedication & Cornerstone Ceremony will be on December 7, 2006. She is waiting to hear from the Secretary of State for additional details.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

No report.

BY-LAWS

No report.

ORGANIZATIONAL REPORTS

Spitzfaden (MOAA) – The MOAA does not understand why it is taking so long to produce the entrance criteria for the Veterans Home and would like to see more action.

Harden (WAVES) – Their next meeting will be on March 18, 2006. They have received several letters for their scholarship program. The “Salute to Hospitalized Veterans” was very successful. They are now working on the Patient Carnival scheduled for Saturday, May 6, 2006. She has received her three flags, partially due to the VVA, and will deliver them to the Cemetery today.

Webb (VVA) – Felt that when someone from this State dies in Iraq or Afghanistan, the Commissioners should attend the funerals. He added that he had only missed two, but of the ones he did attend, he was the only Commissioner attending.

Kitson (VFW) – VFW had their Voice of Democracy and Patriots Pin Banquet on February 19, 2006. The 1st place patriots pin winner, grades 1 through 8, won 3rd place in the national competition, which is the highest they’ve placed. We will be out in force in Washington, DC, for our VFW Conference scheduled for March 5-9, 2006.

Ennis (KWVA) – Although he will continue to represent the KWVA on the Commission, his tenure as Department Commander of the KWVA will end prior to the next meeting. Gene Rose will be taking over as Department Commander. In February, the 436 ALW sets aside a day for the KWVA at the DAFB museum and honors them with a 10K run.

Thompson (MCL) – Thanked everyone for the get-well cards. He attended the Mid-Winter National Convention for the MCL in February and picked up some new ideas. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs spoke and he said that veterans are much more satisfied with VA care than any other type of medical care right now.

Carroll (MOPH) – His organization presents medals and certificates for leadership awards throughout the State; there are some 17 high school programs involved. Recently, a senior student, with straight As, from the Delaware Military Academy, elected to go to Honduras during spring break to participate in a program that builds and improves homes. The MOPH will provide financial support to this individual for this project.

Magner (AMVETS) – Delaware AMVETS has been instrumental in forming a new nationally recognized organization the “AMVETS Riders”. This motorcycle group is made up of AMVETS members, including the Auxiliary and Sons. They have begun promotional runs and events to benefit veterans and communities throughout their home states. Delaware’s Chapter holds the first charter issued to this group. Post 2 in Millsboro has concluded its phone card drive in which they collected and

distributed 268,442 phone minutes. They were sent to Walter Reed Medical Center and other military hospitals. The next Department meeting will be held on March 25, 2006, 10:00 AM, at the Commission Office in Dover.

Morris (American Legion) – The National Commander will be visiting next month and he may be going overseas to Iraq shortly. The breakfast with the Commander will be held on March 5, 2006, 7:30 AM, at Post 2.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Commissioner Ennis presented for consideration the KWVA pension resolution that was previously discussed and moved for its adoption.

MOTION BY ENNIS TO ACCEPT THE KWVA PENSION RESOLUTION, SECONDED BY WEBB, MOTION CARRIED.

Tony Davila is going to place an article in the next edition of “The Centurion” concerning HB 129 to generate more support. Mr. Davila discussed issues relating to the operation of the Veterans Home and clarified the Commission’s role at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

Tony Davila reported that he met with cemetery directors throughout the State and introduced the new internet Funeral Directors Interment Schedule (FDIS) program. We are possibly the only State in the Union that is doing this; it’s a pilot program and is scheduled to be implemented around August of this year.

ITEMS FOR THE GOOD AND WELFARE OF THE ORGANIZATION

Chairman Morris agreed with Commissioner Webb and encouraged the Commissioners to attend as many funerals as possible.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: **March 28, 2006 (11:00 AM)**

LOCATION: **Robbins Bldg, 802 Silver Lake Blvd, Suite 100
Dover, DE**

ADJOURNED